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ABSTRACT

This study explores the effects of controlling influence attempts on social face and constructive conflict resolution. It also investigates the role of social face in how persons respond to evaluations by their peers. A sample of 90 college undergraduates randomly assigned to six conditions. The group's evaluation of the representative's relative effectiveness (more effective, equally effective, or less effective) was orthogonally crossed with the intentions of the other representative (control or collaborative) to form six treatment conditions. Participants who confronted a collaborative, compared to a controlling, bargainer more often reached an agreement, felt more accepted, perceived a more cooperative relationship, and were more attracted to the other bargainer. Participants whose group member indicated that they were equally effective rather than less effective or more effective than the controlling bargainer more often reached an agreement. Results were interpreted as suggesting that persons resist control influence attempts as a way of asserting that they are independent, capable persons and that persons are more motivated to appear superior or to avoid appearing inferior when their relationship is competitive rather than cooperative. (Author)

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Control Strategies and Social Face in Conflict

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Abstract

Participants who confronted a collaborative compared to a controlling bargainer more often reached an agreement, felt more accepted, perceived a more cooperative relationship, and were more attracted to the other bargainer. Participants whose group member indicated that they were equally as effective rather than less effective or more effective than the controlling bargainer more often reached an agreement. Results were interpreted as suggesting that persons resist control influence attempts as a way of asserting that they are independent, capable persons and that persons are more motivated to appear superior or to avoid appearing inferior when their relationship is competitive rather than cooperative.

Control Strategies and Social Face in Conflict

For many educators, maintaining discipline and control are central to effective schooling. Indeed, observers (e.g., Waller, 1932; Willower & Jones, 1967) have commented that educators are preoccupied, even obsessed, with the control of students. Educators have been found to become more committed to control with experience, perhaps because the adoption of control attitudes is a prerequisite for peer acceptance (Hoy, 1968; 1969). While this control orientation has been documented, its consequences on school life have not been clarified. This value on control may directly affect how administrators, teachers, and students resolve their differences. This study explores the effects of controlling influence attempts on social face and constructive conflict resolution. In addition, this study investigates the role of social face in how persons respond to evaluations by their peers.

This control orientation may predispose educators and students to try to resolve their conflicts by attempting to control each other. Several theoretical analyses suggest that targets who believe that the other negotiator intends to control them resist being influenced. Deutsch (1973) argued that controlling strategies (e.g., threat) often escalate conflicts in that they affront the social face of the target. Persons typically want to maintain social face in that they wish to appear strong and capable to others. A controlling strategy can challenge the success of these efforts to maintain face attributed to it. It is likely that "tough" strategies like threats convey different intentions depending upon the conditions under which they are made (Pruitt & Kimmel, 1977). One purpose of this study is to suggest that the intention the target attributes to the other bargainer affects substantially how he responds to the other's strategy. In particular, the extent to which a target

believes that the other intends to control him--whether this intention is conveyed by a threat or some other "tough" bargaining strategy--is expected to affect his willingness to being influenced.

The targets of these strategies feel that to yield to intimidation is to confirm that they are dependent, weak persons. Consequently, they defy the other's demands to demonstrate that they are not the kind of persons who can be controlled, even though defiance may cost them tangible outcomes (Tjosvold, 1974). Reactance theory (Brehm, 1966) has similar implications. Strategies that convey an intent to control may be experienced as jeopardizing the target's freedom to decide whether to comply and thus provoke the target to defy the other's demands as a way of asserting this freedom. Strategies that indicate the influencer intends to collaborate by recognizing that the target and influencer should jointly make decisions may not create resistance to being influenced.

In addition to affecting how they respond to controlling strategies, the efforts of negotiators to present a face of strength and competence may affect how they react to their group's evaluation of their negotiating performance. Bargainers whose audience indicated that they had lost face by appearing ineffective were found to retaliate against the other bargainer, perhaps as a way of trying to appear strong and capable (Brown, 1968). Evidence suggests that bargainers who are told by the other negotiator that they appear ineffective resist reaching an agreement because they fear making concessions would confirm that they are weak persons (Tjosvold, 1974). However, an affirmation that the representative has appeared very strong and capable may also create resistance. Representatives whose group indicated that they appeared very strong and capable were found to resist reaching an agreement, perhaps because they did

not wish to tarnish this image by making concessions (Tjosvold, in press). These studies when taken together suggest that representatives who believe their group member views them as less effective than the other bargainer may refuse to make concessions in order to regain a measure of social face whereas representatives who believe their group member views them as more effective than the other bargainer may refuse to make concessions in order to maintain a superior image.

Resistance to compromising due to the group's comparative evaluation may, however, be mitigated when the other bargainer has a collaborative stance. Because the representatives believe their relationship with the collaborative bargainer is largely cooperative, they may be less interested in their standing relative to the other bargainer. Argyris (1970) has proposed that the value of comparative and evaluative feedback is rooted in closed, competitive social milieus. Persons in competition are worried about their relative performance: They wish to "win" by performing more effectively than others and to avoid "losing" by performing less effectively. In cooperative relationships, persons may be less motivated to appear superior (as a sign of winning) or to avoid appearing inferior (as a sign of losing). Bargainers who have developed a cooperative relationship may not be enticed by their group's superiority or inferiority feedback away from reaching an agreement that increases their group's tangible outcomes. The second hypothesis is that representatives reach an agreement when their group member believes they are performing equally as effective, rather than more or less effective than the other bargainer, when this bargainer has indicated an intention to control them. When the other bargainer has indicated a collaborative intention, the group member's evaluation does not affect the representatives' willingness to reach an agreement.

Method

Subjects and Design

Ninety male and female volunteers were recruited from an undergraduate course at The Pennsylvania State University and were randomly assigned to six conditions. The overall design of the study implied a 2 x 3 factorial analysis of variance. The group's evaluation of the representative's relative effectiveness (more effective, equally as effective, or less effective) was orthogonally crossed with the intentions of the other representative (control or collaborative) to form six treatment conditions.

Procedure

The experimental session had a planning stage (phase 1) and a negotiation stage (phase 2). The purposes of phase 1 were (a) to inform the participant of the bargaining situation, (b) to gain his commitment to his group's position, and (c) to give the participant an individualistic orientation to the negotiations. In order to accomplish these purposes, two groups, each consisting of a participant and a confederate (posing as a participant) were placed in separate rooms. Each dyad was told that it represented the management of the Packrite Company and that the other group represented the workers of Packrite. Each group was given the same instructions. The instructions informed the participants that the Packrite Company produces packing machines for vegetable and fruit canneries and dairy creameries. The workers have become dissatisfied with their pay and have organized into an informal group to press their demands for higher wages. As the group is not a union, it cannot strike, but the workers have threatened to slowdown and lower their productivity if a new contract for the next year is not reached. The issue of the wage increase would be negotiated by the representatives from the management and the workers in the second phase of the experiment.

Each group received a list of profits that indicated the six possible new agreements along with the expected company profits associated with each of these possible agreements. The list of profits also included the company's profits if no new agreement was reached and the workers did slow-down. So that the participants would have personal and tangible incentives corresponding to the company's profits, they were told that they could earn chances to win $20 in a lottery and that the number of chances depended upon what (if any) agreement they reached with the other negotiator. For the participants' group (the management), the higher the wage increase, the lower would be the company's profits and the fewer the number of chances to win $20 the participants would earn for themselves. With five of the possible new agreements, Packrite would receive more profits and its representatives more chances than if no new agreement was reached. If the new agreement least advantageous to the management (an agreement at $12 a week wage increase) was reached, the company's profits and chances would be equal to its outcomes if no new agreement was made. Participants did not know the worker group's outcomes for these six possible new agreements.

Briefing sheets that outlined five arguments supporting the management's position were also given to each group to help the group prepare to defend its position in the negotiations.

The instructions also informed the participant that either he or his group member would be chosen by chance to negotiate with the other group's representative and that the other person would observe and evaluate the negotiator's performance. Both the observer and negotiator would receive the same number of chances depending upon what, if any, new agreement was reached. The participant also believed that the observer would share his

evaluation with the bargainer in the third phase of the experiment. A drawing was arranged so that all participants were chosen to be the negotiator. (The confederates did not, in fact, observe nor share their evaluations with the participants.)

The work of Blake and Mouton (1962) and Ferguson and Kelley (1964) indicates that the intergroup procedure used in this study would accomplish the purposes of phase 1. The results of a questionnaire administered at the end of the prenegotiation induction period indicate that participants felt that the issue was personally important to them, that they were satisfied with their group and its position, and that their position was somewhat incompatible, dissimilar, and superior to the other group's position. Data also indicate that the participants were motivated to make as much money for their group as they could (individualistic orientation) rather than to make more money than the other group (competitive orientation). As expected, an analysis of variance yielded no significant main or interaction effects on these inductions.

To begin the negotiation portion of the experiment (phase 2), the confederates exchanged rooms with one another; each confederate was introduced to the participant as a representative from the worker group. The experimenter told the participant and the confederate to present their opening positions in about three minutes and that they should negotiate freely for the rest of the eight-minute period. The experimenter explained that after completing a short questionnaire they would have twelve additional minutes in which to negotiate. The participant was directed to present his opening position first.

At the end of their opening presentation, the confederates in all conditions indicated that they would agree to a $10 a week increase. They negotiated in a way that indicated that they were trying either to control or to collaborate with the participants. They communicated these intentions by completing a questionnaire (described below) and by the manner in which they negotiated. In the control condition, the confederates told the participant to submit to their demands. They argued that the participants had to agree to these demands. Confederates in the collaborative condition told the participant that they were not trying to force him to agree, that an agreement should be reached that benefited both groups, and that he should decide for himself whether to agree or not.

After eight minutes of bargaining, the experimenter gave to both the participant and the confederate a midway evaluation that was supposedly their group member's evaluation of their negotiating performance. The questionnaire clearly indicated that the group member was evaluating the representative's performance and not his position. Participants in the superior condition read that their group member had checked the most favorable of seven possible responses, "very much stronger and much more capable than the other negotiator," and that the group member had written, "I think that (name of participant) is doing a much better job negotiating than the other person. He seems to be a much stronger negotiator than the one representing the workers." Participants in the equal condition read that their group member had checked the fourth most favorable response, "their performance is about equally strong and capable," and had written, "I think (name of participant) is doing about as good a job negotiating as the other person. He seems to be about as strong a negotiator as the one representing the workers." Participants in

the inferior condition read that their group member had checked the sixth most favorable response, "much weaker and less capable than the other negotiator," and had written, "I think that (name of participant) is doing a much worse job negotiating than the other person. He seems to be a much weaker negotiator than the other person. He seems to be a much weaker negotiator than the one representing the workers."

The experimenter then directed the confederate and participant to complete a questionnaire that asked them to indicate their primary intention in the negotiations. For participants in the control condition, the confederate wrote, "I am trying to pressure him to agree to my position. I want to force him to give in to my side." For participants in the collaborative condition, the confederate wrote, "I am trying to present my argument and to listen to (name of participant) so that we can reach a good agreement. I don't want to pressure or force him to agree to my position, but I want us both to freely agree to a settlement that we both can benefit from." To the surprise of the participants, the questionnaire was then exchanged in order, the experimenter explained, to increase the communication between them. This questionnaire procedure was adopted because to test the hypothesis of this study the participants had to believe that the other's actual intention was to collaborate or to control. Previous research suggests that various forms of positive evaluations are often suspected when persons are dependent upon each other (Mettee & Aronson, 1974). Bargainers then may sometimes view overt collaborative behavior as disguising actual control intentions. This questionnaire procedure was thought to assure that the participants would believe that the confederates'

would believe that the confederates' overt collaborative or controlling behavior was congruent with their actual intentions.

Four minutes into the next session, confederates in all conditions indicated that they would agree to an $8 a week increase. Two minutes later, confederates clearly told the participants that they would not make any concessions below $8. After 12 minutes, the experimenter told the participant and the confederate that the negotiation session was completed and directed them to complete a form indicating what agreement if any they had reached. Since the confederates would only agree to an $8 a week increase, the participants had to be willing to concede to $8 in order to reach an agreement. They were then separated and the participant completed a questionnaire that measured the effectiveness of the inductions and measured the dependent variables of perceived cooperative relationship, acceptance, and attraction.

Four female and three male undergraduate students were trained in an extensive pilot study to induce the participants to be committed to their position in the first phase and to bargain with the participants in a standard manner in the second phase. The confederates were unaware of the participant's group member feedback condition. They were not informed of the hypotheses and an informal discussion after the experiment suggested that they were unaware of them.

Results

Participants were given the role of their group's representative and negotiated with a bargainer who expressed an intention either to control

or to collaborate with them. Their group member also evaluated their negotiating performance as more effective, equally as effective, or less effective than the other bargainer. Two seven-point questions were included in the postnegotiation questionnaire to check the effectiveness of these inductions. Participants in the control condition ($M = 1.42$) indicated that they believed that the other bargainer was trying to force them compared to participants in the collaborative condition ($M = 3.00$), $F(1,84) = 36.23$, $p < .01$. An analysis yielded a significant main effect for participants' perception of their group member's feedback, $F(2,84) = 205.63$, $p < .01$. Follow-up tests indicate that participants in the superiority feedback condition ($M = 1.63$), compared to participants in the equality condition ($M = 3.67$), rated that their group member believed they were more effective than the other negotiator, $t(28) = 5.90$, $p < .01$. Participants in the equality feedback compared to participants in the inferiority feedback condition ($M = 6.56$) rated that their group member considered their performance more positively, $t(28) = 8.36$, $p < .01$. It can be concluded, therefore, that the inductions necessary to test the hypotheses were successful.

Because several variables were measured, the following significance level procedure was used. A .05 significance level was adopted for the agreement variable because this is the major dependent variable for which the most statistical power is desired. To reduce the possibility of Type I error, a .01 significance level was adopted for the remaining variables of acceptance, cooperativeness, and attraction.

According to the first hypothesis, bargainers who negotiate with a bargainer who attempts to collaborate with them, rather than to control

them, were expected to reach an agreement. The data (summarized in Table 1) support this hypothesis. More participants (47 per cent agreed) reached an agreement with the collaborative bargainer than participants (24 per cent agreed) with the controlling bargainer, $F(1,84) = 5.12$, $p < .05$.[1] Participants felt more accepted by the collaborative than by the controlling bargainer, $F(1,84) = 27.63$, $p < .01$. Participants perceived their relationship with the collaborative bargainer as more cooperative than did participants with the controlling bargainer, $F(1,84) = 13.09$, $p < .01$. Participants were also more attracted to the collaborative than to the controlling bargainer, $F(1,84) = 19.17$, $p < .01$.

Insert Table 1 about here

The second hypothesis suggests that a representative's willingness to reach an agreement depends upon his group member's feedback when he has a largely competitive relationship with the other bargainer. As expected, when participants negotiated with a bargainer who intended to control them, participants (13 per cent agreed) whose group member told them they had appeared less effective than the other bargainer more often refused to reach an agreement than did participants (47 per cent agreed) whose group member informed them they appeared equally as effective, $t(28) = 2.19$, $p < .05$.[2] Participants (13 per cent agreed) who confronted the controlling bargainer and believed their group member thought their performance was more effective more often refused to reach an agreement than did participants who were told that they were equally as effective as the controlling bargainer, $t(28) = 2.19$, $p < .05$. It is clear from the data

that there are no significant or nearly significant differences due to the group member's feedback when the other bargainer indicated an intent to collaborate. These results support the second hypothesis.

Discussion

Results clearly support the argument that bargaining strategies that indicate an intent to control create resistance to agreement and escalate conflicts. Data on the attitudes of the participants toward the other bargainer suggest insights into the dynamics of how controlling and collaborative strategies result in differing bargaining outcomes. Participants indicated that they felt rejected by the controlling bargainer and believed their relationship was largely competitive and negative. These results suggest that the controlling bargaining strategy may have affronted the social face of the targets by indicating that the other did not accept them as competent persons. As suggested by previous research (Tjosvold, 1974), an affront to social face can frustrate targets, induce them to perceive their relationship as competitive, and provoke them to refuse to comply with the other's demand in order to reassert that they are strong and capable persons. The collaborative strategy, on the other hand, appeared to have conveyed acceptance of the other's social face and, therefore, gained compliance. On a more general level, the negative attitudes toward the controlling bargainer and the refusal to comply with his demand support a central proposition of reactance theory (Brehm, 1966) that persons resent restrictions on their freedoms and act to assert those that have been jeopardized.

These results suggest a way to resolve the apparently contradictory findings on threat and other "tough" strategies. Pruitt and Kimmel (1977)

have argued that researchers in conflict often fail to identify the background conditions of their research methods and, as a result, are unclear as to the situations for which their findings are likely to be valid and invalid. According to Pruitt and Kimmel, most of the research methods used in conflict have placed th participants in strategic environments. In these environments, bargainers focus on gaining tangible outcomes while being relatively disinterested in their relationship with the other bargainer. Perhaps studies (e.g., Tedeschi, Bonoma, & Brown, 1971; Michener & Cohen, 1973) that found that threats do not escalate conflicts placed the participants in strategic environments. These threatened participants may have been relatively unconcerned about their relationship with the threatener and, in particular, whether the other intended to control them. They then complied with the threat when that appeared to increase their tangible outcomes.

Certainly bargainers are often interested in their relationship with each other as well as in gaining tangible outcomes. An examination of the communication between the participants in Deutsch and Krauss' (1962) study suggests that they were concerned about their relationship with each other; they also appeared to have personally resented the other's threats. The methods used in the present study were expected to place the participants in an interpersonally oriented environment: The participants negotiated face-to-face with the other bargainer and received their group member's evaluation of their performance relative to the other bargainer. Evidence suggests they had strong relationship concerns in that they developed different attitudes and feelings toward the other depending upon his actions. These participants were also found to resist the other's intention

to control them. Bargainers who are in relationship oriented environments, compared to strategic ones, may then be more sensitive and responsive to indications that the other intends to control them. Research that directly induces interpersonal and strategic environments could clarify this argument.

The approach to research on bargaining strategies used in this study complements the more traditional approach. Typically, a strategy has been hypothesized to convey specified intentions, attitudes, or expectations on the part of the influencer which are expected in turn to induce certain reactions in the target that affect his resistance to compromising. Threats, for example, are thought to convey an intent to control that affronts the social face of the target which in turn increases resistance (Deutsch, 1973). In this study, strategies were investigated that directly indicated the intention of the influencer. This approach to research on bargaining strategies appears to have two advantages. Since there is likely to be less variance due to differences in how the target interprets and experiences these strategies, research using this approach may find more consistent effects than the more traditional approach. Second, more confidence can be given to the hypothesized explanation of the relationship between the strategy and its consequences because the attitudes, intentions, and expectations the strategy conveys to the target need not be assumed. As a consequence, the number of reasonable alternative interpretations is usually reduced.

The finding that a bargaining strategy that conveys an attempt to control creates resistance to compromising has considerable practical as well as theoretical importance. Organizational climates and interpersonal

theories often emphasize that effective influence attempts are those that unilaterally control the target (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Students, for example, may quickly learn to rely on this method of influencing others (Argyris, 1974). Results of this study imply that reliance on collaborative influence attempts rather than on controlling ones may contribute substantially to an organization's capabilities to resolve its conflicts constructively.

A controlling bargaining strategy was also found to increase a representative's responsiveness to his group's evaluative feedback. When the opposing negotiator intended to control, participants who believed they appeared inferior or superior to the other negotiator significantly more often refused to reach an agreement than participants who believed they appeared equally as effective. However, when the other bargainer was collaborative, no significant or nearly significant difference was attributable to their group member's feedback.

These results give support to Argyris' (1970) proposition that the value placed on comparative evaluation is heightened in closed, competitive social milieus. According to Argyris, in open, cooperative relationships, persons want descriptive information about their behavior that can help them act more effectively rather than comparative evaluations. The results of this study support this argument by suggesting that bargainers who perceive their relationship with the other bargainer as competitive may be so determined to appear superior ("winning") and to avoid appearing inferior ("losing") that they fail to act in ways that increase their tangible outcomes.

The results of this study shed some light on the consequences of the control orientation of many schools. DeCecco and Richards (1974) argued

that unilateral attempts to stop school conflicts are dysfunctional. While control attempts may suppress conflicts, these conflicts are inevitably expressed in alternative and often destructive ways. Results of this study provide experimental support for this argument by suggesting that educators and students resent and resist attempts to control them, even though this resistance may be costly.

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Footnotes

[1]As suggested by Hsu and Feldt (1969), the analysis of variance was used on the dichotomous variable of agreement.

[2]As suggested by McNemar (1962), the *t* test for proportion was used to compare two groups on the dichotomous variable of agreement.

Table 1

Comparison Among Conditions on Dependent Variables

Variable	Collaborative			Control			Significant Comparisons
	Superior	Equal	Inferior	Superior	Equal	Inferior	
Cooperation	3.13	3.93	3.60	4.53	4.87	5.20	Coll. vs. Control**
Acceptance	2.40	2.93	2.47	4.40	4.13	4.33	Coll. vs. Control**
Attraction to Bargainer	2.07	1.93	2.40	2.47	3.87	3.47	Coll. vs. Control**
Agreement	.53	.47	.40	.13	.47	.13	Coll. vs. Control*

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

Agreement was scored as 1; no agreement as 0. The lower the score the greater the cooperation, acceptance, and attraction. These questions had 7-point scales. N = 90, 15 in each cell.